Current Status and Future Trends in School Counselling in Australia

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Abstract

School counselling in Australia is presently in a state of flux and adaptation. Within this period of change and adjustment, three key points are acknowledged. First structural and organisational change is a constant in the field of school counselling in the Australian context. Second, despite this, the nature of the school counselling role tends to remain the same but with new areas of need being added, such as self harm and cyberbullying. Third, each state and territory in Australia has differing role statements and training requirements for its school counsellors. This paper initially reviews the historical context of school counselling in Australia, including changes and developments in qualifications and training programs. A description is then provided of the current status of school counselling including the differences among the state systems. Issues such as work intensification, uncertainty of tenure, supervision, ethical issues and online counselling are discussed. The scant research into the effectiveness of the profession is outlined, followed by future recommendations.

School counselling in Australia is carried out by school psychologists or school counsellors. Across Australia two main names: school counsellor and school psychologist are used, with similar but not identical academic and training requirements across and within states and territories (Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools [APACS, 2013]). For example, in NSW most school counsellors are psychologists although called school counsellors. In this paper the term school counsellor will be used to include all types of professionally qualified counsellors and psychologists working in school contexts.

Schooling in Australia

School counselling cannot be understood without some geographical and historical context of schooling. Geographically Australia is a vast continent, the planet's sixth largest country with 7 692 24 square kilometres, almost the size of the United States of America or Europe. More than 85% of the population of 23 and half million live within 50 kilometres of the coastline. However, there are many rural and remote schools, most specifically in the largest geographical states of Western Australia and Queensland.

Politically Australia is divided into six states and two territories: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Schooling is a state and territory government responsibility as compulsory schooling began when the states were separate colonies. Therefore, there is diversity between state systems in schooling and consequently in school counselling/psychology. Nonetheless, most Australian students attend preschool or kindergarten for a year before school, then six years of primary school, followed by six years of secondary schooling. Students with disability may be catered for in segregated special schools and special classes (Ashman & Elkins, 2005). However, today inclusive education is the dominant philosophy, if not always enacted. Additionally, in every state there are three schooling systems; schools that are provided free by the government (servicing 63% of

students), schools that are governed by a Catholic archdiocese (22% of students) and other, independent, usually religious affiliated schools (15% of students).

In 1901 Australian states joined in a federation. The Commonwealth or Federal government has been increasingly involved in schooling and now has considerable influence both economically and educationally. Economically the Australian government provides funding for government schools and is also the major provider of public funds for non-government schools. This enables the Federal government to specify certain conditions for schools to meet. As schooling becomes more nationalised with, for example, the introduction of the national curriculum, national testing and accountability, national teacher registration and professional standards (Wiltshire & Donnelly, 2014), school counselling could also be evolving in this direction. One example of this trend is the national registration and accreditation of all psychologists in 2010, including school psychologists.

History of School Counselling in Australia

The profession of educational psychology and counselling in schools began in Australia after the Second World War, although it had its origins decades earlier in special education (Faulkner, 2007). In 1948 it was estimated that were only 20 school psychologists in Australia, mostly in New South Wales (Korniszewski & Mallet, 1948). These services had a very narrow focus of intelligence testing. Historically this was because in the 1950s there was a push for universal secondary education and intelligence tests were administered to all Year 6 students in NSW to aid in the selection of the most appropriate secondary schools for students (Hughes, 2002). Even before this, the establishment of child guidance in NSW in the 1930s, together with the expansion of special classes and schools, meant that a significant psychometric, intelligence-based assessment tradition had already begun in Australian schools (Shute, 1995). Additionally, as well as assessing children for suspected intellectual disability, applied educational psychology also involved work on pedagogy and the provision of prevocational guidance (Korniszewski & Mallet, 1948). However, from the 1980s Australian society increasingly recognised children's and young people's problems and the

notion of prevention and early intervention work for school counsellors became more widespread.

The Present State of Play

Australia is only one of 10 countries identified as fulfilling all five criteria to qualify as having a nationally established school psychology service (Jimerson, Skokut, Cardenas, Malone, & Stewart, 2008). These criteria are: (a) identifiable professionals in the role; (b) regulations requiring registration or credentialing; (c) professional associations; (d) university programs to prepare school psychologists and (e) university programs at doctoral level.

Titles

Although at this time the roles and functions of all school psychologists and counsellors in Australia are broadly similar, there are distinct differences across the six states and two territories reflecting the nation's cultural and historical regionality (Faulkner, 2007). As previously noted, this is particularly shown in the different terms by which school counsellors are known in different locations, such as school counsellor, school psychologist, guidance counsellor and educational psychologist (APACS, 2013). As Michael Faulkner (1999) describes it, the term denotes "the 'holder of office' within a bureaucracy" (p. 103).

Roles and Responsibilities

In general the role of the school psychologist or counsellor is to assist students, teachers, parents and school communities to enable students to reach both educational and social-emotional outcomes by proactive and reactive strategies. It is an ever expanding role, which means school counsellors not only assist students with mental health concerns but also provide psychological assessment, behaviour management interventions, consultation, career and personal counselling, and professional development for teachers and colleagues (Barletta, 1996). These tasks involve not only students, but also parents, teachers, principals and external professionals. This variety of professional duties is multi-dimensional and seems as Bardon (1983) stated that, instead of developing as a profession, educational guidance and counselling in Australia has instead accumulated tasks. The trend Bardon identified has

continued over the past thirty years with additional roles, skills and competencies being expected of a school counsellor (McKie & Colmar, 2013).

In order to make sense of these tasks the Australian Psychological Society recently produced a paper titled *Framework for the effective delivery of school psychological services* (2013). One of its purposes is to provide information about the role of a school psychologist for those working in education, to advocate for practice standards to be met by all school psychologists, and to provide a national and unified approach to the practice of school psychology in Australian schools. The document provides a model of school psychological service delivery using what could be described as a domain and subdomain approach, with the descriptive language arising from the integration of roles, activities and tasks, with personal attributes and contexts. Detailed practical advice and information is also provided on many of the challenging areas of school psychology practice (McKie & Colmar, 2013). The main roles, activities and tasks are described as Prevention (e.g., information and psycho-education for students, student programs for wellbeing, information to parents and teachers, health promotion), Assessment (e.g., educational, psychological, diagnostic), Intervention (e.g., counselling, mental health service provision, intervention for learning and behaviour), Collaboration (e.g., consultation, critical incident management, referral to community agencies) and Management (e.g., administration, record keeping, research and evaluation, supervision and mentoring).

Not only has school psychology services been widened to focus on the increasing needs of young people but it also has been influenced by its strong relationship with educational public sector organisations. As a minority profession in a large educational bureaucracy, it has been subject to and influenced by the many changes in organisational restructuring and new policy initiatives (Faulkner, 1993; McKie & Colmar, 2013).

Service Delivery Models

There are many different service delivery models for school counsellors throughout Australia. In most secondary schools there is an allocation of a practitioner, dependent on the

number of students, who usually services a single site (Rice & Bramston, 1999). In primary schools, practitioners service multi-sites. In some states there is a combination of servicing both a secondary school and the primary feeder schools. Many school psychologists are based physically at the school site while in other places they are based at a district office and go out to schools on a needs basis. Although the needs basis has some benefits of equity, these practitioners are not able to work systemically influencing the climate and practices of the school. Additionally, principals of schools seem to prefer to have an invariant allocation of time for the counsellor.

Thielking (2006) investigated school psychologists in Victoria and found that they were working systemically as part of a school team as well as providing traditional services such as counselling and assessment. An interesting finding was that the roles were slightly different for those servicing multi-sites or single sites as well as different for those in government and non-government schools. Those practitioners who worked in government schools and/or serviced multi-sites, participated in more psycho-educational assessments and undertook less program development and delivery than their peers who worked in non-government schools and on one site. The multi-site practitioners also were less professionally satisfied with their office space, file security, access to technology and psychosocial resources. Those working on one site had more time to deal with matters that were not driven by some level of crisis.

Ratio Allocation

In some states in Australia there is an oversupply of personnel who are qualified to be school counsellors, who are still working in the classroom. In 1992 there were 1400 school psychologists Australia wide in government schools (Whitla, Walker, & Drent, 1992) with a ratio of counsellor to student between 1:1544 in NSW to 1:4200 in South Australia. In 2013 there were over 2,000 school counsellors with the ratio of counsellor to student from a low of 1:1050 in NSW to 1:3500 in South Australia. It is interesting to note the increase in

practitioners over this time period and the consequent reduction of counsellor to student ratio, with the ratio in NSW still the lowest and South Australia still the highest.

Gender, Age, Remuneration

School counselling is a female dominated profession in Australia. There are 89% female counsellors (NSW Department of Education and Training [NSW DET], 2011), which is similar to the proportion of primary school teachers but higher than the proportion of high school teachers. It appears that there has been a substantial decline in the percentage of males to females working as school counsellors, known as Guidance Officers in Queensland, from 1999 when there were 44% of males which dropped in 2010 to 28.2% (Anderson et al., 2010; Bramston & Rice, 2000; Rice & Bramston, 1999). This mirrors a similar decline in males in the general teaching population throughout Australia and the world (Martino & Kehler, 2006; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004), and is in spite of state governments campaigns to increase the percentage of male teachers. Furthermore, enrolment figures indicate parallel declines in the percentage of males in pre-service school counselling training courses.

Most school psychologists and counsellors are over 45 years old (NSW DET, 2011) with a median age of 52. This is slightly older than the teaching population as psychologists may have completed some years of teaching then further postgraduate studies. About 40% of NSW counsellors are over the national retirement age but still working. There also appears to have been a substantial increase in the age of school counsellors in Queensland; from 37.5% who were over 50 in 1999 to 56.4% who were over 50 in 2010.

As dual trained and experienced personnel, school counsellors generally receive more remuneration than teachers but less than school administrators. In 2013 the average annual wage of a teacher was about $65, 000 (Salary Calculator Australia, 2014) and a school psychologist or counsellor about $90, 000 (APACS, 2013). However, in NSW school counsellors are classified as teachers and paid the same as a teacher.

Training and Accreditation

In Australia there is dual training for most school psychologists and counsellors in education and psychology. There are various pathways with most people training as teachers and then mid-career training as school psychologists (Burnett, 1997). Some however, take a dual degree in education and psychology, while a very few work as psychologists and then take an education degree. Queensland however, is the only state that historically has employed teachers with post-graduate training in school guidance and counselling rather than teachers who are also psychologists.

In the mid 1970s master's degree programs in educational or school-related psychology were being offered in universities mainly within education faculties (Faulkner, 2007). To cope with the expanding types of service provision that society and schools were demanding from school counsellors, from the 1980s university course offerings also expanded (Ritchie, 1985). In at least two states of Australia: Queensland and Victoria, a partnership model of training was instituted with universities training in post graduate studies and the state education employing authority training in practical and institutional imperatives. In Queensland this model was in place from 1975 to 1992 and in Victoria from 1972 to 1993 (Faulkner, 1999). From 1993 the state education employers withdrew and the universities took over the pre-service training of school counsellors. New South Wales still offers retraining in partnership with a university, with one other unique program at The University of Sydney training students with a Psychology Honours degree, and therefore eligible for provisional registration as a psychologist, in a post graduate teaching and school counselling Masters degree.

Professional Associations

In Australia there are two major professional associations catering for school psychologists and counsellors. One is the Australian Psychological Society, which only psychologists may join. It has nine colleges, one of which is the College of Educational and Developmental psychologists, which requires psychologists to have specified qualifications and experience in this area. There is also an interest group of school psychologists, which any

member of the APS can join, and a School Psychology Reference group, which is an invited membership. The other association is the Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools (APACS), which is a national body of various state associations such as the Queensland Guidance and Counsellors Association and School Psychologists in Western Australia. Membership to APACS is by state affiliation. Both these associations provide a Code of Ethics for their members and vie for membership, as well as both claiming to be the peak body for school psychologists and/or school counsellors.

Issues for School Counsellors in Australia

Work Intensification and Extension

With the increasing mental health issues evident in young people in Australia and the national agenda for the prevention of suicide (Sawyer et al., 2000) there has been increased workload issues for school counsellors. An estimated 14% of children and adolescents aged from 4 to 17-years-old experience mental health problems in Australia (Zubrick, Silburn, Burton, & Blair, 2000), with major mental health problems and mental disorders reaching their peak period of onset during adolescence with half of all lifetime cases of mental disorders starting by age 14 (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, & Walters, 2005). Onset in early adolescence is also increasing (Mitchell, 2000) and has profound and long-lasting implications for the health and wellbeing of Australian adults and their productive engagement in society and achievements. Young people with mental disorders and emotional and behavioural problems typically have lower academic achievement (Ialongo, Edlesohn, Werthamer-Larsson, Crockett, & Kellam, 1995), peer relationship problems (Strauss & Forehand, 1987), impairments in general social competence (Messer & Beidel, 1994), more suicidal ideation and behaviour (Sawyer et al., 2000), and engage more in smoking, harmful alcohol and other drug use.

School counsellors are an important source of support for adolescents, who very often face mental health issues and challenges associated with life, learning and work choices. Such services are effective in supporting adolescents across a full range of issues (Pattison &

Harris, 2006). Young people who do seek help are likely to first access their local doctor and second, utilise school-based counselling services (Boyd et al., 2007; Sawyer et al., 2001). In research conducted by Bramston and Rice (2000), when asked to nominate difficulties they faced in their work, school counsellors identified mental health disorders as the number one priority. Anderson and colleagues replicated these findings in a study in 2010. While the nationally supported social-emotional programs of Mind Matters and Kids Matter have been established in schools, it is still incumbent on school counsellors to identify and assist students with mental health disorders. This additional workload is evidenced by professional burnout, which is increasingly facing school counsellors (Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007).

Further areas of work intensification and role widening include strengthening schol counsellors' advocacy role for social justice for students from minority ethnic and racial backgrounds and victims of aggression (Nastasi, 2008; Rogers & O'Bryon, 2008). McCabe and Robinson (2008) note that other students are at risk of being marginalised at school and require support, for example, those students who are same sex attracted or gender questioning. Further, at the early childhood and primary aged levels, school counsellors are increasingly needing to assess and to respond effectively to the needs of students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (Sansosti & Sansosti, 2013) following extensive Federal government funding for these children.

Uncertainty of Tenure

For the last 50 years the school counselling profession in Australia has been in constant change. One concern that is continually expressed both in Australia and in other countries is that the profession is disappearing (Nielson, 1993). Although this is obviously not the case in Australia, there are continuing uncertainties that plague the profession. With the introduction of chaplains (paid by the Commonwealth government), social workers, youth workers and school-based health nurses, there were initial tensions with school psychologists and counsellors about professional boundaries (Faulkner, 2006).

There is also a trend with non-government schools to outsource their assessment and counselling needs to private practitioners. Businesses set up by psychologists to service schools are also proliferating (Faulkner, 2007). As most school-based psychologists and counsellors are also teachers, it can be a precarious position as the employing authority can easily redeploy them as teachers in the classroom as happened in Ireland in 2012 (McGukin & O'Brien, 2013). The national medical insurance health scheme, Medicare, has offered the Better Access initiative to enable general practitioners since 2006 to refer patients for psychological counselling for no cost. This initiative, coupled with the impending introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, where people with disability will be funded to provide for themselves and not service providers, is making some school counsellors concerned. While schools will be required to deliver a model of inclusive education from its own resources to all students with disability, there will also be a need to negotiate any potential co-funding arrangements (Gotlib, 2012). As mentioned previously psychological assessment for special placement is a major task for school counsellors and there is now uncertainty if this will continue.

Furthermore, in most of Australia there is a trend towards increasing autonomy in school management. The concept of public/private schools, where a government funded school may employ or terminate their own staff and where the budget is controlled by the principal, is becoming popular. Therefore, school counsellors are concerned that some principals may dispense with their services to employ more teachers. In addition to these changes there is also a change to the general nature of work with increasing casualisation of the workforce, part-time work and the rise of contracts with decreasing ongoing tenure. There is still, however, a difficulty staffing rural and remote schools with experienced school counsellors; therefore, only newly qualified people are more likely to accept these positions with ongoing consequences such that their supervisors may also not be very experienced.

Multi-Cultural Issues

With 24% of the Australian population born overseas, there is an urgent need for training in multi-cultural counselling for school counsellors. Additionally, 4% of school age children are from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and 3% are Islamic students (Preston, 2013), with significantly higher concentrations of these groups in specific settings, such as metropolitan Sydney in NSW. With many waves of migration to Australia mainly after World War Two, school counsellors have faced difficulty in fairly assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially for difficulties in learning (Frisby & Reynolds, 2005). Added to this problem is the fact that most Australian based counsellors are competent only in English (Jimerson et al., 2007).

Supervision Issues

Professional ongoing supervision has been of concern to school counsellors for many years, with specific supervisory needs for those who are fully or provisionally registered psychologists. Barletta (1996) lamented the lack of employer provided supervision. As school counsellors represent less than one percent of the workforce in the schooling system, their role as a minority profession is precarious and not well understood. There is a disproportionate emphasis in schools on the managerial supervision of school psychologists, with concerns more about the organisation's goals, rather than clinical supervision for best practice for clients. The minority status of school counsellors presents many issues both for the organisation and for the practitioners in terms of clinical supervision (Magnuson, Norem, & Bradley, 2000). The organisational culture of schooling is usually based on defensive styles in which feedback is primarily negative and mistakes are to be avoided rather than being seen as opportunities for learning (Cooke & Lafferty, 2000). Additionally, as education systems are based on a hierarchical bureaucracy, the word supervision almost always connotates a supervisory relationship of power and control, and thus principals of schools often see clinical supervision for school counsellors as taking time away for client services (McMahon, 1998). Most school psychologists and counsellors have been employed as teachers prior to their training, which tends to perpetuate the already entrenched culture.

Furthermore, there is typically no training provided by the employers in clinical supervision, despite the obligations of senior psychologists and guidance counsellors to provide it. Practices of supervision are therefore of limited and potentially dubious quality, and are performed in an ad hoc and inconsistent manner (Campbell & Wackwitz, 2002). Unfortunately Thielking's (2006) study showed that 20 years on from Barletta's initial work, the situation has not improved and lack of supervision was a particular concern for practitioners given the increasingly complex and challenging nature of school counsellors' work.

Ethical Issues

Being in a minority profession in the school system has the potential to create tensions between principals and counsellors as they work from, at times, opposing professional paradigms. Principals and school counsellors are often placed in ethical dilemmas generated by the tension between their different foci - principals on the common good of the school as a whole and counsellors on the wellbeing of the individual student. There is also a tension between the humanistic client-focussed values of school psychologists and counsellors, and the bureaucratic, managerial, economic focus of schools (Faulkner, 1994). These dilemmas are seen particularly in relation to questions of confidentiality, informed consent to undertake counselling, and counselling as a disciplinary matter (Kimber & Campbell, 2013). The findings of this study conducted in Queensland found that there was tension between principals and counsellors especially around the topic of confidentiality. Such dilemmas can lead to tension between principals and counsellors because open communication, especially about students, is often encouraged in schools. Generally, this open communication is beneficial for students but counsellors may feel that information students share with them in confidence cannot be shared with others. Some counsellors in this study felt the tension between the professional requirements of confidentiality and the employment obligations of reporting intensely, with "one counsellor stating that they would prefer a student not tell them everything so they would not be required to breach their trust"

(Kimber & Campbell, 2013, p. 213). Counsellors' concern with confidentiality is supported by research suggesting that students are reluctant to access counselling at school due to the real or potential breaches of confidentiality (Campbell, 2004; Collins & Knowles, 1995; Reid, 1996). Recently this issue has been raised nationally, precipitated probably by the increasing autonomy of school principals especially in respect to who is allowed information from a client's confidential file. The issue is not resolved although the APS School Reference Group recently released a memorandum on the issue (2014).

Online CounsellingIssues

Despite Australia being one of the leading countries in the uptake of the new digital technologies, there have been no school-based online counselling services to date. This is surprising as the internet and communication technologies play an ever increasing role in the social lives of young people in western societies, with young people treating the mobile phone as an essential necessity of life, often preferring to use synchronous chat such as MSN to communicate with their friends (Campbell, 2005). The benefits of technology for young people in particular have been identified as a way of overcoming their 'shyness' and 'paranoia' of meeting a therapist (Moulding, 2007; Nicholas, Oliver, Lee, & O'Brien, 2004). This is evident in Australia where there has been a rapid increase of online counselling services in the community for adults over the past ten years (Gedge, 2002). The community based youth service, Kids Help Line, introduced email and web counselling to complement the telephone help line in 1999 and 2000 (Kids Help Line, 2003). Since then a number of 'youth friendly' websites have been developed such as Reachout (http://reachout.com.au) and itsallright.org (http://www.itsallright.org). However, as mentioned previously it is surprising to note that Australian school counsellors have not embraced online counselling in their work (Glasheen & Campbell, 2009).

The effectiveness of online counselling has been found to be at least equal to face-to-face counselling (King, Bambling, Reid, & Thomas, 2006; Richards & Vigano, 2013). King and colleagues found that the alliance that young people develop when accessing the online

counselling available through the Brisbane based *Kids Help Line* is effective and less threatening for many young people. However, many school counsellors believe that online counselling is not as engaging as *face-to-face* counselling but this is debatable. Early research indicated that online counselling may not suit everyone and all conditions (Abbott, Klein, & Ciechomski, 2008). However, the potential benefits of the 'disinhibition effect' as described by Suler (2007) which is present in the online interaction, often leads to early disclosure of personal information and may in fact mean that the length of rapport building may be reduced online. The fact that young people tend to be more uninhibited online may be an advantage when fostering help-seeking avenues with 'at-risk' youth. It seems that the opportunity that online counselling may provide for young people experiencing various forms of distress, may be a positive force in building help-seeking behaviour among this cohort.

Evaluation and Research

Unfortunately, there are no published reports on the effectiveness of school-based counselling in Australia, either from employing authorities or by researchers. The few state-wide reports on these services in schools are purely descriptive. There seem to be only a few local reports, which examined this issue 20 years ago. In 1993, in an unpublished report by Byrnes and Fleming, it was found that schools in Victoria strongly valued the support of school psychologists (as cited in Faulkner, 1994).

There are three Australian journals catering for school counsellors: the *Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, the *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, and the *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools* (formerly the *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*). Even in these journals there is scant research on the profession as a whole. This is possibly because of the expense of carrying out such a large-scale project, which would also need to define measurement issues with the many stakeholders. There was one research paper examining the comparing the perceptions of secondary school counsellors and principals in Queensland concerning the present and preferred activities of school counsellors (Dickinson, 1994). It was found that

there was a high degree of correlation with the tasks being carried by the school counsellors and what would be preferred between both groups, suggesting satisfaction with the profession at that time.

There has been some small research on the effectiveness of training school psychologists and counsellors. Ashman, Gillies and Beavers (1993) conducted an evaluative study to ascertain school counsellors' perceptions of the adequacy of their training which involved 236 graduates. The study showed that there were 12 major areas of knowledge base rated on a 6 point scale, with the training for counselling theory and practicum rated as having the highest effectiveness (4.8 and 4.3 respectively) and training for curriculum theory and remedial teaching rated lowest (2.4 and 2.6). There were also 19 statements for effectiveness of training in skills areas. In general these ratings were considerably lower than the effectiveness of ratings for training in knowledge, with 8 skills below average with a rating of under 3. Additionally, there were significant differences between the rating of primary and secondary school counsellors in 11 of the skills, with some primary respondents rating some skills training as more effective than secondary respondents and vice versa.

Following on from this study Bramston and Rice (2000) surveyed Queensland school counsellors working for Education Queensland. As well as describing their work, the 145 respondents also reported on the job demands for which they felt least adequately trained. Approximately one third of the respondents indicated there were no tasks for which they felt inadequately trained. However, the other two thirds listed specialist areas such as suicide intent, management of mental illness, writing forensic reports and management of cults and violence as areas where they felt least adequately trained. The authors concluded that the generalist training model either needed to be extended or more specialist training provided (Rice & Bramston, 1999).

Recommendations for the Future of School Counselling in Australia

It is a truism that we live in a world of accelerating change which impacts on all aspects of our lives. While not being able to predict the future we can take collective ownership of

our professional destiny (D'Amato, 2003). This starts with our training of future school counselling practitioners, including examining the nature of the existing training programs in aiming to prepare people adequately for a complex and changing role. To meet their expanding and complex role, there needs to be an emphasis on training people how to respond flexibly and creatively, whilst ensuring their own wellbeing in the school counselling role.

Given the states' (and territories') responsibility for funding and managing school counsellors, aspects of the profession will need to be supported within states. However, national coordination and advocacy at a national level is needed to enhance and develop the profession. Logically the professional associations are best placed to take a national perspective. At each level, overcoming organisational inertia with centralised bureaucracy is a challenge we all have to face. It will require strong leadership, clear articulation of the new directions we think school psychology should be headed towards and a groundswell of commitment to change.

Clinical supervision could be greatly enhanced by a comprehensive program of induction and training for new supervisors and supervisees provided by employing authorities. Additionally, it would be important to have ongoing professional development and processes for recognising, valuing and encouraging academic study with the view to developing expertise in clinical supervision. Supervision is also critical as the school counsellor's roles expand, with the acknowledged broadening of the range of services provided by school counsellors beyond traditional core focus areas (Hanchon & Allen, 2013).

The provision for online counselling as an adjunct service to face-to-face counselling may also help connect school-based counsellors more to their clients. More training in cultural sensitivity and more employment of diverse cultural and language psychologists would assist in meeting the needs of more students. The lack of research into the profession itself is concerning. The scant research into the professions would not be sufficient to mount a case for the provision of school-based counsellors, quantified in economic terms to

employing authorities and policy makers. This is worrying as McGuckin and O'Brien's paper (2013) rightly highlights to international colleagues that, when the guidance and counselling services in Ireland were severely curtailed due to budget constraints, there was an "absence of a well-defined and argued evidence base regarding the efficacy of school based guidance and counselling services" (p. 275). Over 700 positions were lost with the guidance counsellors returning to classroom duties. Of course this situation brings more inequity with students whose parents cannot afford private counselling missing out and schools not having the capacity for preventative work. The authors ask would our profession in Australia withstand scrutiny with evidence of our effectiveness from a government under financial pressure? In Australia we are leaving ourselves in a vulnerable position with no reports or research into the efficacy of school-based counselling services. This push for an evidence-base in the scientific community for psychology with the gold standard of randomised control trials has coincided with the managerial culture of schools in the last quarter of a century, where there is a now more of a performance orientation and managing for results within an economic rationalist perspective (Faulkner, 1994). As individuals we need to be accountable for our work, using action research to systematically evaluate our practice to improve its effectiveness (Gillies, 1992). We also need our professional associations to undertake the work of research on effectiveness at both a state and a national level. This issue of evaluation seems, however, to be an international problem (Farrell, Jimerson, & Oakland, 2006).

Universities need to train more school psychologists and counsellors to engage in research, and professional associations need to encourage this research and scholarship, provide avenues for the dissemination of best practice and highlight and promote services, not only at the individual level of schools, but also to lobby state and national policy makers.

In summary, in Australia, with its inherent differences in staffing ratios, qualifications, modes of training, and work practices, a united voice is needed to ensure the links and commonalities in issues of significance for all school counsellors are stated. The two national professional bodies have an obligation to not only support, but also to enhance the profession

of school counselling, including establishing it as a significant recognised profession. Advocacy could include putting key information in the public domain about the high level of qualifications, skills and roles undertaken by school counsellors and to emphasise that it is a distinct and important profession best positioned to meet the needs of children and young people in the schooling context.

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